



Gemma Henry

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Q What does your current role entail, and tell us about your journey to this position?

A My role includes providing tax advisory assistance to clients, and being their partner to ensure that commerciality and tax considerations are at the forefront of transactions, as well as day to day business.

After completing my studies, I joined KPMG in 2013 as an audit intern in the automotive, industrial and manufacturing sector. During my second year, I thought a lot about what I wanted for a career, and what my interests would be. I decided that tax was an avenue of interest so, in 2015, I enrolled to study further and commenced my post graduate diploma in tax law.

In discussion with an audit partner during a team lunch one day, he offered to introduce me to the head of our tax and legal department. I walked into the tax department for a casual discussion about a career in tax, and was disappointed to learn that an internal secondment wasn't something that had been done before. As someone more on the shy side, it took a lot of courage for me to ask about seconding, so to say I was extremely disheartened was an understatement. Much to my surprise, a few weeks later, my planning schedule reflected that I would, in fact, be getting my request and I joined the corporate tax team for a short secondment in May 2015. That was the start of cementing my interest and career in tax, and I joined the corporate tax team in January 2016.

I have worked across multiple industries, providing tax compliance, controversy and advisory assistance, and enjoy working in diversified industries and understanding the different financial and tax aspects of these businesses.

Q What, in your opinion, is the biggest difference between working on an

external advisory team and being on the in-house M&A team?

A From my view of working as part of an external advisory team, I think the biggest difference is the different people you meet daily – clients, colleagues, legal counsel, competitors and legislators.

The continuous access to different people – across specialisations, jurisdictions and cultures – on an ongoing basis, while working on various deals, aids a wealth of knowledge, experience and connections. In my view, this helps you build a broader business perspective, which can lead to innovation which is founded in best practice.

Q What advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal?

A There are 2 things:
1. Preparation is key – you need to ensure that you are prepared for all meetings and discussions from a sector, industry and legislative context.

2. Don't be afraid to speak up – everyone has something valuable to bring to the table. It is often in these robust conversations that you gain valuable knowledge and build relationships.

Q What was one of the most memorable transactions you worked on and why?

A I was part of the team that received the award for best team structuring advisor to Project Oribi at the Private Equity Africa GP and Advisor Awards in 2017. I was privileged to have been involved, and learnt a significant amount from the interactions I was able to witness and be a part of.

Q Do you have a role model or someone you greatly admire and, if so, who are they and why?

A My role model is, and always will be, my mother. Although quiet and reserved,

when she speaks, people always pay attention. She has a way of succinctly getting her point across; and even when she is delivering a difficult message, it is done with empathy and grace. She is known for being unwavering in her beliefs, and steadfast in her support and love for her family. There is no one fiercer when it comes to her family than my mom – fierce with her love, care and protectiveness.

The two words that best describe my mom are grace and fierce. Although these words can be somewhat conflicting, the quote: “she conquers with grace and rules with kindness” comes to mind. I can't think of anyone I would want to emulate more – as a woman, as a mother, as a human being. I'm blessed to have been brought up by someone who approaches all situations with love and an unshakable belief in who she is. She is someone I learn from daily.

FUN FACTS

Preferred holiday destination:

For a holiday, relaxing and unwinding and spending family time is key, so it would have to be a destination with a beach. Nothing beats the sound of waves and the sun on your face while sipping a cocktail, with my kids playing in the sand. My travel bucket list definitely includes the Maldives.

What genre of music would one find on your favourite playlist?

My taste in music is varied, and I am often drawn to someone's voice or the lyrics of a song, but I would have to say the most common genre on my playlists would be country, with a soul/pop blend. I really enjoy the voices of Teddy Swims, Benson Boone, and Iam Tongi.

Your worst trait:

If overthinking was a sport, I could compete at the Olympics. This is something I have to constantly be aware of and work on. 🎧